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Friday, 17 November 2000, 12.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. van Aartsen	(Netherlands)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Listre
	Bangladesh	Mr. Ahmed
	Canada	Mr. Heinbecker
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Malaysia	Mr. Misran
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Namibia	Mrs. Ashipala-Musavyi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Tunisia	Ms. Achouri
	Ukraine	Mr. Krokhmal
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia

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00-75203 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: It gives me great pleasure to join the Council and to provide it with an update on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

This new operation holds great promise for the countries and the peoples involved, for Africa and for peacekeeping in general. We must get it right and I look forward to working closely with the Council to achieve that goal.

My representative for Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ambassador Legwaila, has now taken up his functions in the Mission area. His qualifications are known to all Council members. Mr. Legwaila met in Addis Ababa with Prime Minister Zenawi, Minister for Foreign Affairs Mesfin and other senior officials, all of whom have pledged their support. Yesterday, Ambassador Legwaila arrived in Asmara and plans to have similar contacts with the Government of Eritrea there. He has also met with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), members of the diplomatic community and various United Nations officials, who will be working closely with UNMEE. In carrying out his assignment, Ambassador Legwaila expects to travel regularly between his two offices in Asmara and Addis Ababa so as to maintain close contacts with both parties as well as with the OAU.

I have also appointed two senior officials as Deputy Special Representatives: Mr. Cheikh Tidiane Gaye and Mr. Ian Martin, who will reside full time in Addis Ababa and Asmara, respectively. The two deputies will take up their posts shortly.

The military deployment is also proceeding on schedule. The Force Commander, Major-General Patrick Cammaert of the Netherlands, has assumed his functions in the mission area. As of today, some 120 United Nations military observers have been deployed to the two countries and the first troops will begin to arrive soon. With the continued cooperation of the two parties, the deployment of UNMEE is expected to be completed by early next year, up to an authorized strength of 4,200 troops of all ranks, including up to 220 military observers. Military teams from several troop-contributing countries — Canada, Denmark, Jordan, Kenya, the Netherlands and Slovakia — have already undertaken reconnaissance missions for their deployments.

You yourself, Sir, visited the area last week and I am interested to hear your assessment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Netherlands for its generous support of this operation, as well as all other Governments that are making contributions.

The situation on the ground appears to have stabilized in recent weeks, but humanitarian conditions in both countries remain a source of serious concern. In Eritrea, there are more than 300,000 internally displaced persons, some accommodated in camps and others in host communities or scattered around the country. In Ethiopia, some 350,000 people have been displaced. The most critical obstacle to their safe return and the resumption of normal life is the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance along the border. It is therefore imperative to ensure early demining and to conduct mine awareness programmes in these areas. UNMEE, for its part, has begun to conduct demining surveys. Both Governments have established national commissions for de-mining. I hope the Council will give these efforts its full and timely support.

We are continuing consultations with the Governments on the status-of-forces agreements and hope to conclude these as soon as possible. Both sides have agreed to open, on 28 November, the first land access route for the use of UNMEE's convoys and other activities. This is a most welcome development, since it is crucial that UNMEE enjoy freedom of movement and early access to the future temporary security zone. Further efforts will be pursued to establish air access routes. We are making progress in this regard and I will keep the Council informed.

The ceasefire has held since the signing of an agreement in June under the auspices of President Bouteflika of Algeria. Thus far, both parties have shown a commitment to implementing this document.

That is a real achievement. The deployment of UNMEE is designed to help maintain peace between the two countries. The military observers on the ground are developing the capacity to verify the situation and discuss problems that might arise. This should help the parties to reduce mutual mistrust.

One step that would contribute greatly in this regard would be the establishment of the military coordination commission, as called for in the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. I am pleased to note that both parties have agreed with UNMEE that the first session of the commission could be held later this month. We must sustain this momentum, not least to gain additional support from the international community for the development needs of both countries.

United Nations agencies are ready to do their part. Indeed, close coordination between UNMEE and the humanitarian agencies will be essential, and for that reason a system of civil-military liaison should be established as soon as possible. I trust that both parties will continue to cooperate with the mediators to the proximity talks, Algerian Minister Abdelkader Messahel and United States Special Envoy Anthony Lake, with a view to resolving the outstanding issues and achieving a comprehensive settlement. The United Nations stands ready to assist and my Special Representative is ready to take part in future talks in his capacity as observer.

Allow me to conclude by noting that the beginning of any peacekeeping operation is a very sensitive time. The steps the United Nations takes send signals about our intentions, our effectiveness and, most of all, our resolve. At the same time, the steps taken by the parties also offer indications about their willingness to cooperate and about the level of trust and political will. With our diplomats, military personnel and civilian staff taking up their positions, we have entered a period of higher stakes and intensified scrutiny of our actions. The people of Eritrea and Ethiopia, and many others beyond their borders, are counting on us to help. Together, let us rise to this challenge. I hope we will.

The President: Once again, the Secretary-General has reinforced our conviction that Africa matters, both as a continent of concern and as a land of promise. It matters to the Security Council. In the past six months, the Council has sent missions to Central Africa, Ethiopia/Eritrea and West Africa, attesting to its newfound readiness to reach out to Africa, its people and its leaders.

Africa matters to the Netherlands. A stable, prosperous Africa is good, first of all, for its own people, but it is also good for us. That is why stability, development and economic growth in Africa are a priority of our foreign policy.

That is why the Dutch Prime Minister chaired last year's debate on Africa; that is why my colleague, our Minister for Development Cooperation, will chair an open meeting on post-conflict peace-building in Guinea-Bissau at the end of this month; that is why a significant proportion of our development budget goes to Africa; that is why Ambassador van Walsum has travelled to Africa several times; that is why I visited Africa last week; and that is why I am here.

In Nigeria, I discussed with President Obasanjo the promotion of peace and security in West Africa. As we Europeans have learned in recent history, regional cooperation initiatives are crucial as a means of transforming old feuds into new prosperity. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the subregional organizations therefore deserve our full support.

The Netherlands has offered to support regional peacekeeping initiatives out of a peace fund which we established recently, just as we already support regional conflict prevention.

Let me turn now to the question of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Dutch-Canadian battalion of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) will arrive in the region by mid-December. With that in mind, I visited Ethiopia and Eritrea last week, and I would now like to share with the Council some of my observations, which might also be of interest to other troop-contributing countries present here today.

In Ethiopia, I saw the Prime Minister, Mr. Meles Zenawi, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin. In Eritrea, I held talks with the President, Mr. Isaias Afewerki, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ali Said Abdella, and the Minister of Defence, Mr. Sebhat Ephrem. Furthermore, my delegation and I had extensive talks with representatives of the OAU, representatives of UNMEE and Mr. Anthony Lake, and with various humanitarian organizations in Ethiopia and in Eritrea.

I came away from my talks in Ethiopia and in Eritrea with the impression that both parties have a genuine desire for peace and are eager to start reconstruction and development. In the peace process ably led by Algeria and the OAU, some progress seems to have been made on issues such as compensation and the investigation into the origins of the conflict. And I hope a breakthrough will be possible in the not-too-distant future on the question of demarcation of the border.

Yet, at the same time, the mutual distrust between Ethiopia and Eritrea remains as deep as ever, causing the peace process to move very slowly indeed. I impressed upon the representatives of both States that UNMEE can only provide a breathing space to facilitate the resolution of their differences. It cannot and should not be considered as the solution to the conflict itself. I stressed that their differences should be resolved by the conclusion without delay of a comprehensive and final peace settlement.

Nevertheless, I fear that there is a possibility that both parties may get used to the presence of UNMEE and become dependent on it in the way that the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus now seems indispensable to Cyprus.

In order to give further impetus to the peace process, I propose the establishment of a group of friends of the peace process. Furthermore, to help start to remedy the deep distrust between the two States, I proposed to the parties an initial five confidence-building measures.

Agreement to such confidence-building measures would give the international community more confidence that the peace process is taken seriously. Those measures would also have a positive effect on the renewal of the mandate of UNMEE, which is dependent on progress in the negotiations and which would have a beneficial effect on the relations between the two States by beginning to dispel their mutual distrust.

Both States reacted positively to our proposal and said they were willing to engage in such a reinforcement of the OAU-led peace process. The package of five initial confidence-building measures I proposed consists of the following.

The first is the reciprocal and, if possible, immediate release and return of interned civilians under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War requires that internment should cease as soon as possible after the close of hostilities and that parties should endeavour to ensure the return of all internees to their last place of residence or to facilitate repatriation. As Ethiopia and Eritrea have signed a cessation-of-hostilities agreement, civilian internees must under international law be released immediately.

The second is the opening of a land and air corridor for UNMEE. It is important that the opening of road access for the benefit of UNMEE take place soon, as the Secretary-General has said. But an air corridor is just as essential for the immediate deployment of UNMEE and should be established forthwith. In the future, these corridors should also be made available for civilian traffic.

The third confidence-building measure is an exchange of maps showing mined areas. The presence of mines is proving to be a major obstacle for the population in the affected areas, and prevents the return of internally displaced persons. I therefore proposed that both countries should provide UNMEE with maps showing the exact location of mined areas.

The fourth is the simultaneous release of an initial 250 prisoners of war by both parties. Under the Third Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Prisoners of War, all prisoners of war should be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of hostilities. As such a situation has existed since 18 June, there is no legal basis on which to detain prisoners of war. However, I realize that the release of prisoners of war is a sensitive issue. Therefore, I suggested a phased approach. An mutual release of an initial 250 prisoners should ideally take place by the end of this year.

The fifth confidence-building measure is a mutual moratorium on arbitrary expulsions until such time as the nationality laws of Ethiopia and Eritrea have been adapted. Ethiopia has expelled many thousands of "Eritreans" and Eritrea has expelled many thousands of "Ethiopians". That was done mostly in an arbitrary manner, in disregard of the rule of law. The persons expelled do not always automatically qualify as citizens of the other State, with the result that expelled persons may become stateless. I therefore proposed that both parties agree immediately to a moratorium on

expulsions. That moratorium could end a year after advice by the ICRC has been received on how to tackle the problems of the different nationality laws.

I have asked my delegation to consult with all members of the Council on the text of a presidential statement that would reflect our discussion today; I trust that we can agree on such a statement and adopt it next week.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): We would like to thank and commend the Dutch presidency for calling this important open briefing. In particular, I would like to thank the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. van Aartsen, for his thoughtful presentation, and also to thank the Secretary-General for his comments.

We applaud the commitment of the Netherlands to advancing peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Mr. van Aartsen's efforts complement the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and our own continuing intensive assistance to Ethiopia and Eritrea with respect to concluding a final peace agreement.

We wish to congratulate the Netherlands on its substantial contribution to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), and on the appointment of Major-General Patrick Cammaert as UNMEE Force Commander. We should also acknowledge all the other Member States that have made or will make significant troop contributions to the Mission.

The landmark Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, which was negotiated under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and signed by the Foreign Ministers of Ethiopia and Eritrea at Algiers on 18 June, is a major step towards a final, peaceful settlement of the conflict. By all indications, the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea have held true to their commitments and continue to respect the Agreement. We must take advantage of this opportunity to lay the foundation for a durable peace.

It is now incumbent upon all of us to encourage the parties to sustain the political will necessary to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement. We urge them to extend their full cooperation to UNMEE in the implementation of its mandate and to exercise every restraint. A credible United Nations presence will serve as a confidence-building measure that we hope will promote trust and bolster the peace negotiations. The United States support for UNMEE remains strong, and we are pleased that deployment is under way.

While we welcome these signs of progress, a final peace settlement must be achieved. Several outstanding issues need to be resolved. An agreement on the delimitation and demarcation of a common border is a critical component to a final peace agreement. This element will be essential if the peace between the two neighbours is to be self-sustaining and beneficial to the people of both countries.

As I think we would all agree, Blue Helmets should never be seen as substitutes for peace agreements, but as the creators of opportunity to achieve a durable peace. The growing United Nations presence in Ethiopia and Eritrea should calm tensions and create an environment for the search for solutions. While the search for improved bilateral relations may continue in perpetuity, the presence of United Nations peacekeepers should not. Likewise, the Council must work to ensure that peacekeepers provide the catalyst for progress and not an excuse for procrastination.

We welcome Foreign Minister van Aartsen's suggestions on appropriate confidence-building measures — such as the return of prisoners of war — which could be taken both to help resolve outstanding humanitarian issues and to move the parties closer toward a final accord. The Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities makes explicit the commitment of the parties to determine their common border if a quick agreement cannot otherwise be reached. Indeed, that commitment appears no fewer than five times in the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities.

The United States remains committed to supporting the efforts of the United Nations and the OAU to achieve a permanent, lasting peace. The President's special representative, Mr. Anthony Lake, will continue to engage with Minister Messahel of Algeria and with the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea to bring a just and lasting settlement to this conflict.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): We are very grateful to the Secretary-General and to you, Mr. President, for your introductory and really very

substantive remarks, as well as for the personal attention that you are bringing to this question.

We warmly welcome the arrival of Ambassador Legwaila and of Major-General Cammaert. We are pleased that efforts by Algeria, the United States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the European Union to restart the peace talks are beginning to make some headway and that the process is generally beginning to go in the right direction.

Both sides need to allow the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities to be implemented. Their support for that suggests that the political will for peace exists. It is that political will that will be essential for the conclusion of a comprehensive peace agreement. So we urge both sides to seize this opportunity for lasting peace and not to delay to do so.

The deployment of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) will help the climate for that, but, as you have said, Mr. President, it must not be seen as a substitute for concluding a comprehensive peace agreement. They must not go down that cul-de-sac. They must concentrate on the overall agreement. But with the deployment of UNMEE, it is necessary that both sides give the necessary freedom of movement to the force to enable it to do its job effectively.

The other points I was going to make have been covered, in particular by your five confidence-building measures, Mr. President. The United Kingdom supports those, so I will not go into further detail. We are also pleased that a date is being set for a meeting of the Military Coordination Commission, because contacts between the parties are also an important part of building confidence. But both countries do have to look to the long term. The conclusion of a lasting peace settlement will enable both sides to focus on development, reconstruction and reconciliation, which is what all this is about. My delegation looks forward to discussing the draft presidential statement proposed by the Netherlands. We agree that work on it should be completed next week if possible.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of France, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the briefing you have just given us about the visit you recently made to the region. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Like those who spoke previously, we believe the essential thing to be positively highlighted is the fact that both parties have been respecting the ceasefire since 18 June. We want to believe that this is a clear reflection of their irrevocable commitment to peace.

France is very pleased to see that the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) is being effectively deployed. Its growing strength is, in our view, an effective guarantee for peace. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the contribution made by the Netherlands and other countries to the United Nations operation in Ethiopia and Eritrea. We also welcome the arrival of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the region, Mr. Legwaila, who arrived in Addis Ababa on 9 November and who is today in Asmara. We also welcome the appointment of Major-General Patrick Cammaert.

The President mentioned a number of confidence-building measures recommended to the parties. My delegation subscribes fully to those measures. We would in particular like to appeal to the parties to facilitate the repatriation of prisoners of war and injured prisoners of war. They should also release and repatriate all civilians who are being detained, of which there are between 52,000 and 72,000, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It would be desirable for the parties to generally facilitate the humanitarian work of the United Nations, the ICRC and non-governmental organizations active in the field.

Generally speaking, we agree entirely with what the President has said. We must now ensure that the parties commit themselves sincerely to negotiating a comprehensive peace agreement which could resolve all the bilateral disputes. No doubt, time will be necessary in order to reach a good, solid agreement that will not be challenged later, in particular with regard to the very thorny question of delimitation of borders and the role that can be played by the United Nations Cartographic Unit in defining those borders.

In this spirit, we would be very happy to participate in the drafting of the presidential statement that may adopted early next week.

The President: I thank the representative of France for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for having taken up the presidency, and I wish to welcome you to the Council once again. The Netherlands has contributed greatly to the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and continues to do so. It is therefore fitting that you, Mr. Minister, should preside over today's debate. We appreciate your first-hand account of conditions on the ground following your recent visit to the region.

(*spoke in English*)

We are greatly encouraged that Ethiopia and Eritrea continue to honour the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities they signed on 18 June. We once again applaud the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for its key role in making it happen, as well as the work of President Bouteflika of Algeria and Special Envoy Lake. We believe both Ethiopia and Eritrea have demonstrated a serious commitment to reaching a lasting solution to their dispute. We commend them for returning to the path of peace. We are pleased that the Security Council was able to encourage the parties along that path by promptly authorizing the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to help consolidate the peace that had been reached.

We, in Canada, are pleased to have been part of this endeavour from the outset. Our increased involvement, which recently received the full backing of our Parliament, reflects our commitment, not only to United Nations peacekeeping, but to promoting peace in Africa. This mission is also an important first step for the Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG). We have participated in SHIRBRIG also from its inception as a way of trying to realize our common objective of enhancing the United Nations capacity to act more quickly.

Canada has therefore welcomed the chance to augment our UNMEE contribution with a reinforced mechanised infantry company, which will work as part of the Netherlands SHIRBRIG battalion.

We endorse the confidence-building measures that you, Mr. President, specified in your paper. We had recently participated with our Dutch colleagues in the strategic reconnaissance of the region and it was apparent from that visit that there are numerous challenges that the United Nations will face, whether it is the threat posed by landmines — as highlighted by the Secretary-General — the urgent need to open air corridors to facilitate the movement of UNMEE, or the early conclusion of a Status of Forces Agreement. None of these challenges is insurmountable, if the parties demonstrate continued goodwill and cooperation.

For the two countries and for UNMEE, some of the most difficult work still lies ahead: consolidating peace, promoting reconciliation and healing the wounds inflicted by two years of fighting that has left so many dead and so many more displaced. Ethiopians and Eritreans alike must now move from the discourse of war to the vocabulary of peace. Words, as the Secretary-General reminded us in another context recently, can also cause harm and must not now be allowed to become new weapons, now that the guns have been silenced. We urge both sides to take advantage of the presence of UNMEE to give impetus to the OAU-sponsored proximity talks and to resolve the outstanding issues. To further improve the chances for a sustainable peace, we call on both parties to promote and protect human rights and humanitarian needs on the part of both their populations.

(*spoke in French*)

The time has come to rededicate resources previously wasted on war and apply them to the human security and reconstruction needs of the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Ahmed (Bangladesh): Mr. President, it is a pleasure once again to see you preside over yet another important meeting of the Council. We deeply appreciate your efforts in coming to the Council and briefing us on your recent visit to Ethiopia and Eritrea. My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for personally briefing the Council on the present situation in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The objective of a comprehensive and peace settlement remains to be achieved. We are, however, encouraged at the progress made so far in terms of deployment of United Nations military observers, as well as the peacekeepers, in a designated area. We appreciate the cooperation extended in this by the two sides. With the appointment of the Force Commander and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations is now poised to play an

important role in the resolution of the dispute. We congratulate both Ambassador Legwaila and Major-General Cammaert.

We extend full support to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and trust that, as indicated recently following his first contacts, he would continue to receive the full cooperation of the two Governments in discharging his responsibilities.

We recall with gratitude the tenacious efforts of President Bouteflika and the OAU in facilitating the cessation of hostilities. We now look forward to a successful outcome of the proximity talks in achieving a comprehensive peace.

My delegation remains concerned over the humanitarian situation and the need for demining to be pursued in earnest. In this regard we welcome the progress made and the favourable disposition of the two parties.

As regards demining, Bangladesh remains ready to contribute to this activity and my delegation is in contacts with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on this.

There is no denying the fact that the talks have not been easy, and difficulties remain. What we all agree, we think, is to maintain the calm in the area and sincere efforts to implement the agreement on cessation of hostilities. While the efforts of the mediators are ongoing, we believe the Council should continue to keep watching the situation and do what it can to help the two parties reach agreements on the outstanding issues.

In this regard, Mr. President, we find your initiative timely and extremely useful. We commend the efforts of your delegation in putting forward some ideas for building confidence between the two parties to be formalized in the Presidential Statement. We broadly agree with those ideas and are ready to work with other members in finalizing the text in the coming days.

The President: I thank the representative of Bangladesh for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his valuable information, and I would particularly like to thank you, Mr. President, for having shared with us your impressions from your recent trip to Ethiopia and Eritrea. We would also like to thank you for the valuable suggestions that you have made this morning, which we will study very carefully.

Since Argentina joined the Security Council, we have clearly put forward our substantive situation in this territorial conflict, a position we wish to reiterate at this time.

The use of force in international relations is not a valid means for the acquisition of territory under international law. As such, the occupation of a territory by force gives no better legal title to disputed territory. However long the conflict may last, the situation does not change. That title does not hold as can be seen from Article 2, paragraph 4 of the Charter prohibited use of force in international relations is an imperative in international law. Together with that States are obliged, as stipulated in Article 2, paragraphs 3 and 33, to peacefully solve disputes.

For these reasons, the withdrawal of troops to defined positions, that is to say, return to the status quo ante, does not prejudge the final status of the territory under dispute. The final legal status of that territory will result from negotiations conducted by the parties to delineate and demarcate the border. Respect for the principle of territorial integrity underlies the peaceful and lasting solution of this conflict.

We think that today we have reasons for cautious optimism on the evolution of this situation. The agreement on the cessation of hostilities signed on 18 June last, unlike what has occurred in other conflicts before the Council, is being complied with in good faith in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Those parties are cooperating with UNMEE and it has already deployed military observers in the area of the mission. Unlike other peacekeeping operations in Africa, UNMEE has enough troop contributors coming from more than 20 States Members of the United Nations. These favourable circumstances should be utilized by the parties to consolidate the peace and reach a final decision on this shared border. The presence of UNMEE will surely help to generate a climate of mutual confidence, but both Ethiopia and Eritrea must, by concrete measures — such as the release of prisoners of war or the exchange of information on mined areas — work to restore the confidence that has been lost after two years of war. Nor can there be any doubt that UNMEE, with its 4,200 troops, will play a

stabilizing role, but we also agree that it should not be considered by the parties as a replacement for the peace agreement. The parties must continue to participate flexibly and with a sense of commitment in the negotiations under way with the assistance of the United States, through that President's personal representative, Mr. Anthony Lake, and President Bouteflika of Algeria in order to reach an agreement on the final delimitation and demarcation of their shared border.

As we said in the open briefing on Wednesday, 15 November, dealing with exit strategies for peacekeeping operations, the humanitarian, institutional and economic consequences of a conflict show us that lasting peace and reconciliation require much more than a ceasefire. Conditions for sustainable development must also be established. The international community cannot and must not remain indifferent in this vital task of consolidating this peace that was so difficult to achieve between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First, I would like to thank you, Mr President, for presiding over this meeting. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report and the statement he just made. We appreciate the efforts made by the Netherlands to promote the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Since the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities was reached between the two countries, under the leadership of the Organization of African Unity last June, the situation along the borders has remained calm. The deployment of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) is proceeding smoothly. The two countries have already started proximity talks. The parties involved are doing their best to carry out mediation efforts. We express our appreciation for these positive signs.

At present the two sides are cooperating with the peace efforts being made by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). We hope that the international community can take this opportunity to step up its work, and on the basis of the progress already achieved, try its best to help the two countries achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace. In this regard, we support the efforts made by the OAU, Mr. Bouteflika, the President of Algeria, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as the other parties involved, to continue their mediation efforts to assist both sides in carrying out the next round of proximity talks and in trying to reach agreement as soon as possible on such core issues as demarcation and compensation so as to create the conditions necessary for final resolution. We also hope that the international community will respond positively to the consolidated inter-agency appeal to alleviate the humanitarian situation in both countries.

We appreciate the cooperation rendered by the two countries to UNMEE. We hope that UNMEE can further step up the pace of its deployment. We welcome Mr. Legwaila to the post of the Special Representative for Ethiopia and Eritrea. We hope that under his leadership, UNMEE will be able to carry out its work based on the mandate set forth in resolution 1320 (2000) and contribute to the resolution of the conflict between the two countries.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General and to you, Mr. Minister, for the very important and valuable information on and analysis of the situation regarding the settlement of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict. We share your assessment of the prospects for a settlement of this grievous inter-State conflict, that has divided two fraternal nations.

We are pleased to note the dynamic deployment in the zone of conflict of a full scale United Nations peacekeeping operation. This has been made possible by the high level of cooperation between the parties and the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which are promoting the negotiation process among the parties. I would like to believe that the prospect for a peaceful settlement is not too remote. The road to it goes through the successful conduct of a peacekeeping mission of the United Nations aimed at promoting the implementation of the Algiers agreement of 18 June and through the parallel conduct of negotiations to achieve a final and lasting peace.

Positive steps have already been taken in both areas. The first two stages of deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping mission have already occurred, with the cooperation of the parties. The formation of

UNMEE troops, in accordance with resolution 1320 (2000), is proceeding at full speed. Russia, like other Council members, is relying on this to help strengthen positive measures to resolve the Ethiopian-Eritrean territorial disagreements and to give the United Nations a constructive role in promoting the settlement process.

It is important that at the resumed negotiations, to be held under the auspices of the OAU with the participation of the United Nations representative, the parties state their commitment to the resolution of the conflict by peaceful means. Maintaining the de facto ceasefire regime in the area serves as an eloquent confirmation of this commitment. Under present circumstances restraint and the good will of the parties are particularly significant, prohibiting all provocative acts that may complicate the situation in the conflict zone. In accordance with the obligations they have assumed regarding security, both parties must show maximum good will in creating a climate of mutual confidence. We highly appreciate the efforts of the OAU and its former Chairman, President Bouteflika of Algeria. We believe it is important that the Security Council continue to provide full support and encouragement to these efforts to ensure further progress in the political dialogue.

Unblocking the crisis situation can only be ensured by political methods in the context of norms of international law. We have been consistently and purposefully supporting this approach in the Security Council and through contacts with all the parties involved. We share the concern about the serious humanitarian consequences of the conflict, which have led to a large-scale displacement of population and increased need for greater food aid.

A resolution of these problems requires that priority attention be given by the international donor community and the United Nations specialized agencies. The Russian Federation will provide appropriate humanitarian assistance to the populations of Ethiopia and Eritrea, who have suffered as a result of drought and military action, and to the Ethiopian refugees who are in Sudanese territory.

As a Security Council member and a sincere friend of the States of the Horn of Africa, Russia will continue to actively encourage the establishment of a lasting peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We will be prepared to work with interest on the draft statement to be prepared by the President of the Security Council, with the aim of adopting it next week.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for the kind words he addressed to me.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): Let me thank the delegation of the Netherlands for organizing this open briefing on an issue which is of critical importance to the process of peace in the Horn of Africa and to the African continent as a whole. The fact that you, Sir, have taken this opportunity to brief the Council on your own visit to Ethiopia and Eritrea and to suggest confidence-building measures to give impetus to the peace process clearly reflects the constructive approach which the Netherlands has taken to issues of international peace and security.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his report on developments between Ethiopia and Eritrea since the adoption of resolution 1312 (2000). We welcome the appointment of the Force Commander as well as that of Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We are sure that his diplomatic skill and experience will enable him to gain the trust and cooperation of both parties as he leads the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

We also wish to commend those countries which have provided troops, and we look forward to the full deployment of the Mission. We note that by next Monday, the third phase of the deployment in both countries will be fully under way, leading to the establishment and monitoring of a temporary security zone, in keeping with the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities.

My delegation is encouraged by the fact that both countries have, over the past five months, maintained the ceasefire successfully brokered by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and we commend the OAU and its special representative, President Bouteflika of Algeria. The involvement of the United Nations and the OAU in seeking to resolve this dispute is a good example of the relationship between the United Nations and a regional organization in cooperating in the search for peace.

We agree, however, that much remains to be done to reach a comprehensive and final settlement. This will involve the delineation and demarcation of the

borders, and in this regard we are pleased to note that proximity talks have already begun.

Jamaica continues to be extremely concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in both Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Secretary-General, in his remarks, pointed to the large numbers of displaced persons and to the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance. We support his call to alleviate the human suffering, which has been exacerbated by the fighting, and to implement the demining programme.

In conclusion, let me again thank you, Mr. President, and the delegation of the Netherlands for addressing this issue in such a thoughtful manner. We support the inclusion in a presidential statement of the confidence-building measures suggested by you to the parties and look forward to working with your delegation in completing the statement.

The President: I thank the representative of Jamaica for her kind words addressed to the Dutch delegation.

Mrs. Ashipala-Musavyi: (Mr. President, in your opening remarks you mentioned, among other things, that stability, development and economic growth in Africa are a high priority of the foreign policy of your country. As an African, I should like to say that we can attest to that; it is an indisputable fact. We commend you highly on your initiative to visit the East African subregion to bring us firsthand information on the new developments taking place there. Your thoughtful and substantive briefing and views are particularly timely in view of the arrival and deployment of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) peacekeeping troops. Let me also take this opportunity to express my delegation's best wishes to the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila.

We in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are proud that one of us has been charged with helping to restore peace and stability in another region. We wish to stress the need for the continuous and comprehensive implementation of Security Council resolution 1312 (2000) of 31 July 2000, which established UNMEE, as well as of other relevant resolutions.

It is our firm hope that the commitment of the parties to the agreement on cessation of hostilities will allow the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea, who have been subjected to the horrors of war, to enjoy peace and security. Distrust, in our view, played a major part in causing this conflict. Therefore, any confidence-building measures which can be adhered to by the parties will boost implementation of resolution 1312 (2000) and enhance further the peace between these two neighbouring countries. It is in this context that we view the confidence-building measures you have put forward, Mr. President.

We know that the humanitarian situation is deplorable, even under normal circumstances, due to, among other things, the adverse climate in this region. In addition, landmines pose a serious challenge to security and to developmental activities. Therefore, demining activities in the temporary security zones and adjacent areas are crucial, and international assistance is essential. It is our hope that the task of international humanitarian workers will be facilitated so as to most effectively alleviate the hardships suffered by those in need.

We call on the two Governments to ensure the protection of all international personnel. Their presence in the area is a measure for building confidence between the two sides in support of the peace process.

Today's briefing is taking place a few days after the General Assembly's deliberations on the item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. It is in this context that we view the importance and significance of coordination and cooperation between the Security Council and the OAU.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to your delegation for affording the wider membership of the United Nations an opportunity to participate in the Council's meetings. That in itself underscores the importance you attach to transparency in the Security Council's deliberations.

In conclusion, my delegation commends you, Sir, for having, during your presidency, devoted deliberations to burning African issues.

The President: I thank the representative of Namibia for the kind words she addressed to me.

Mr. Misran (Malaysia): My delegation, too, wishes to thank you, Mr. President, and the Secretary-General for the upbeat briefing and update on the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia. We would also

like to congratulate you and your delegation most sincerely for your personal engagement, as well as for that of your Government, and for your positive contribution to peace efforts in Africa, particularly as concerns the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. I am confident that your laudable efforts will encourage other western Governments to do the same for Africa, particularly with respect to those conflicts that are raging in that continent.

We agree with you that Africa matters as a continent of concern and a land of promise, and, I would like to add, a land of prosperity.

The Council's continued engagement with the subject is critical as the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) begins its final phase of deployment. In this regard, we welcome the recent appointment of Ambassador Legwaila Joseph Legwaila as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as that of Major General Patrick C. Cammaert, who is from your country, Mr. President, as the Force Commander of UNMEE. We believe that these appointments will further enhance the efforts of UNMEE to fulfil its mandated tasks, including that of verifying the cessation of hostilities.

Security Council resolution 1320 (2000), of 15 September 2000, authorized the deployment of up to 4,200 troops, including up to 220 military observers, until 15 March 2001. We believe that UNMEE will play a major role on the ground in helping to build confidence in support of the peace process. In this regard, we hope that all preparations are in their final stages before the imminent arrival of thousands of troops in the operations area. We trust that the parties will give the Mission their full cooperation to ensure UNMEE's access, safety and freedom of movement, as called for in resolution 1320 (2000). It will be equally important for the parties to ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel to the population in need, given the serious humanitarian situation.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to express its satisfaction with the fact that the ceasefire is holding. This demonstrates the parties' resolve to abide by the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. While this is particularly welcome, we wish to reiterate that the agreement links the termination of the United Nations peacekeeping mission to the completion of the process of delimitation and demarcation of the common border. It is imperative, therefore, that the parties continue negotiations, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and conclude, without delay, a comprehensive and final settlement to the conflict.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Kassé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I should like to say how pleased my delegation is to see you, Sir, presiding over this public meeting on Ethiopia and Eritrea, and to thank you for having taken the initiative to hold the meeting. I also thank you for your lucid analysis of the situation, following your recent visit to the region. I should also like, through you, to thank Ambassador Peter van Walsum, for the outstanding way in which he has been presiding over our Council this month. We also wish to thank the entire team of the Netherlands in the Security Council.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, deserves tribute and congratulations for his steadfast support for and dedication to the peaceful settlement of conflicts in Africa, in particular that between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and we thank him for his very instructive statement today.

The signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of Ethiopia and the Government of Eritrea represents a very important achievement and a decisive step towards the peaceful resolution of a tragic conflict that should never have taken place between the two countries. That Agreement, signed on 18 June 2000 and reached through the intensive efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and President Bouteflika, made it possible for the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to be deployed rapidly and expanded.

We welcome the appointment of the Force Commander, Major General Patrick Cammaert – an appointment that does honour to your country, Mr. President. We also welcome the positive role being played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila, who is working with the leaders of the two parties and with the OAU. We hope that these contacts will help to dispel the distrust that exists between the former belligerents and bring them to the negotiating table.

UNMEE, the most recent mission to our continent but one of a new generation of missions, remains a decisive element for guaranteeing a permanent ceasefire and creating the conditions necessary for a lasting settlement. Its deployment cannot be a pretext for political and diplomatic paralysis. In this respect, my delegation endorses the appeal of the Secretary-General to Ethiopia and Eritrea to continue to demonstrate the political will that they showed in signing the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. We believe that such political will will be judged by the progress made in the proximity talks. We also invite the parties to continue their efforts to achieve a negotiated and lasting peace. We believe that the demarcation and delimitation of the border as soon as possible will be an important step in that direction.

As we said after the signing of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, and as we repeated after the deployment of UNMEE, the United Nations and the OAU must continue to cooperate closely at every level. However, in order to restore peace, the OAU needs assistance and support if it is to play its proper role in preventive diplomacy and the rebuilding and consolidation of peace.

The peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea were sorely tried by the conflict between the two countries. The drought has exacerbated the situation. My delegation is particularly troubled by the large number of internally displaced persons and refugees in the region. It will be important for UNMEE to establish and maintain close cooperation with the humanitarian workers in the region. We welcome the clear progress made with the signing of the tripartite agreement. However, we urge the international community to provide generous financial aid, bilaterally or through the United Nations teams in the two countries, in order to provide relief to the population.

My delegation remains concerned about the presence of landmines and other explosive devices. This situation is still an obstacle to humanitarian activities, reconstruction and, in particular, the deployment of UNMEE. We call upon the international community to give technical and financial assistance to the two countries, which in turn should cooperate so that demining activities can be carried out.

In conclusion, Mali calls upon the two parties to continue to show their commitment to peace, development and prosperity, for the sake not only of the two peoples concerned, but for the region and Africa as a whole.

My delegation is at your disposal, Mr. President, for the finalization of the presidential statement.

The President: I thank the representative of Mali for his kind words to Ambassador van Walsum and to me.

Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine): It was with great interest that my delegation listened to your observations, Mr. President, on the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as to the valuable suggestion that you made this morning. I should also like to pay tribute to you for the contribution of the Netherlands to United Nations efforts to find a solution to that prolonged conflict.

We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his informative briefing, which covered recent important developments in the situation and informed us about certain progress achieved in returning to normality in the region.

We support the active efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). My delegation welcomes the resumption last month, under the auspices of the OAU, of the proximity talks between Ethiopia and Eritrea, after the four-month break. It is encouraging that the parties are focusing on peace plan implementation issues. In this context, we welcome the commitments of the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea to the provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, which has been clearly demonstrated as both Governments cooperate closely with the United Nations liaison offices.

United Nations military observers have been deployed so far to the 11 operational team sites of the Mission. It is important to speed up the work of the liaison officers, as well as to establish points of contact and interaction with the military headquarters of Ethiopia and Eritrea at the front. That will facilitate, we believe, the development of a timetable for further deployment of military observers. We also believe that it will be useful to receive from the United Nations Secretariat, on a regular basis, a briefing and information on phase three of the mission's deployment and the preparation of the status-of-forces agreement to be concluded between the United Nations and Ethiopia and Eritrea.

We are pleased to note the important activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Legwaila, whose diplomatic skills and experience are very well known to all of us. The report on the meeting he had in Addis Ababa three days ago gives us good reason for optimism. However, we remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, in particular in terms of food and medicine supplies. A prompt and effective response of the international community to the request for the provision of humanitarian aid to both countries is of particular importance. In this context, we call on both Governments to continue to exercise every restraint in order to prevent deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation.

The President: I would like to thank all the members of the Security Council for their contributions. As a result of this debate, I would like to underscore the following points.

The conflict between the parties needs to be resolved through a comprehensive peace agreement. The United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) can fulfil a useful role in creating the conditions necessary to reach an arrangement, but its presence is not an alternative to such a peace arrangement. Several delegations expressed support for our suggestion that confidence-building measures should be adopted by both parties. I repeat my suggestion that a group of friends be established in support of the peace process. The full deployment of UNMEE must take place as soon as possible. I can inform the Council that the Netherlands will start its strategic lift next week and that our deployment should be complete by mid-December.

The Security Council fully supports the work of the Organization of African Unity, in particular Algeria's efforts and those of concerned member States in order to reach a comprehensive peace arrangement. Finally, the Council stands ready to support an eventual peace arrangement.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.